



## **Preserving the unique characteristics of peri-urban areas and their importance for the attractiveness of living, working and investments in cities**

**Purple, 9 June 2016**

Bringing together European local and regional politicians, civil servants and experts from peri-urban regions enabled an international exchange of views on innovative concepts for a stronger peri-urban dimension. The seminar also served as a starting point for finding European partners for EU funded follow-up projects.

The unique characteristics of peri-urban areas and their importance for the attractiveness of living, working and investments in cities are worth being preserving. Many innovative examples of a stronger peri-urban dimension within the Randstad Region have demonstrated this.

**Michiel RIJSBERMAN** (Regional Minister Flevoland): Governments have an important role to play in supporting innovative initiatives as much as they can. The Province of Flevoland has 30 years' experience with participatory processes for making regional plans. For the last decade we have asked society to participate in our policy making, whereas we should work the other way round, and participate in society if we want to stimulate innovation. The dilemma is then how to facilitate innovations without taking control and overregulating. This question is relevant for all local and regional governments in PURPLE.

**Jan HOEKEMA** (Mayor Wassenaar) added that there is a paradigm shift from traditional agriculture to new ecological agriculture that is interesting for cities. A change in consumer behaviour is needed in order to achieve a reasonable asking price for food. Cities and their surrounding areas need each other. This is the essence of the PURPLE network. We are facing the dilemma of densely populated areas with increasing recreational demands.

**Arnoud RODENBURG** (Mayor Midden-Delfland, host) welcomed the guests with a video of the Cittaslow project that facilitates ways of sustainable living, working and quality of life with respect for the environment, nature and agriculture. "We are proud to have so much green in Midden-Delfland. Together with PURPLE and Cittaslow we have been working since 2014 to improve the quality of our authentic landscape."

The panelists presented best practice examples on how to strengthen the peri-urban dimension.

- **Riette BOSCH** (West 8) stressed the importance of landscapes and the economic power of urban regions. "The quality of our metropolitan landscape is still a blind spot in terms of the economy, no set of rules exists to preserve open spaces." The landscape is an important factor in the global battle for talent. Dutch cities have their origin in "water" so in our urban

planning we want to bring back the lost connection with the water. We want to bring water back in the landscape and the city. The landscape is part of our (corporate) identity.

- **Bas PEDROLI** (Wageningen University) explained, from a scientific perspective, the value of landscapes for the development of cities in relation to what is called the Quadruple Helix. He stressed the need to involve society. Maps of the local area were presented, showing little change until 2000. In 2000 urban sprawl took off in Europe. In the Netherlands land uptake became a problem with over 500 persons per square km per year. The Volante project ([www.volante-project.eu](http://www.volante-project.eu)) offers a framework of scenarios and pathways to visions. Key messages are: that family farms will disappear in Europe within 20 years; that we share clear ideas about future landscapes towards functionality; but that we will not get where we want to be, based on current scenarios; and that we need cross-sector pathways and visions of landscapes as a cradle for new commons of the future.
- **Ed BUIJS (Municipality of Amsterdam)** focused on Innovative local2local systems strengthening the relation of cities and peri-urban areas. Because the metropolitan landscape is multifunctional, a different agricultural policy is needed. Biodiversity has declined enormously in the food chain when comparing the situation in 2016 with that of 1974. Furthermore, cities harm the rural economy. What can be done to improve this situation? We should create higher added value food products and develop new products adapted to new soil conditions. As an example Mr Buijs mentioned a new type of potato grown on sea water on the island of Texel.
- **Truke KOEVERDEN** (Amsterdam municipality). The municipality of Amsterdam stimulates Metropolitan Foodscape, which pays off in a country being the second largest exporter of agricultural products worldwide. The city facilitates sustainable food production by bringing greenscapes in the city and food gardens. Also, Amsterdam works on raising consumer awareness of more healthy lifestyles. Forces are joined in projects such as the Amsterdam Science Lab and Waterland.
- **Gerben DIJKSTERHUIS** (Deputy-Mayor Zeewolde), representing the number one sustainable renewable energy municipality in The Netherlands, explained how cities and rural areas need to work together. Cities offer knowledge and mass, whereas rural areas offer potential and space. National governments should offer a framework for cooperation. There is a challenge of combining rural functions. The example of wind energy was given.
- **Jan HUIJGEN** (Eemlandhoeve farm), winner of the Mansholt prize "We need a new agriculture pact under the new Common Agriculture Policy". Farmers are now at an impasse, they earn low incomes and face many administrative problems. New European perspectives are needed, including new indicators for sustainable food systems, public support for diversified agro-ecological food production, support for short chain development and public procurement of food. Last but not least, "we need passion, vision and courage".



The audience then participated in a lively debate with contributions from **Helyn CLACK** (President of Purple) who brought up the aspect of financing. **Marga VITGENS** (Westland municipality) asked if good practices would work in China. Combining food supply chains, new processing techniques could facilitate regional food supply chains and that could be exported globally. Provided that political conditions are in place, it is possible to experiment elsewhere. **Jan KRAGT** (Zoetermeer municipality) asked about the involvement of marketers. Dutch food products still do not have the same attraction as Italian products. **Reinhard HENKE** (FrankfurtRheinMain) brought up the notion of "landscape", since the European landscape convention is still not ratified by all Member States. This need not be a problem since nature legislation is already in place and Germany and Austria are in reality already implementing the convention. **Tsveta VELINOVA** (Metropolitan region Rotterdam The Hague) mentioned quantification of the economic value. However, "Money is not everything, the way to proceed is to generate a dialogue on landscape vision." You cannot measure everything, but a business case is valuable to demonstrate the need to invest in landscapes. **Katia VAN TICHELEN** (Flanders) commented on the urban sprawl and land market instruments. How to deal with speculation over the value of the land? How does this relate to the new CAP? Eemlandhoeve proves that besides the intrinsic economic value, there is a multifunctional use that cannot be quantified. European data is still missing on land pricing and land ownership. **Dirk WASCHER** (Wageningen/Alterra) mentioned a nostalgic "urban dream" versus the industrial agriculture. Is there space for new regional models?

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This event was held by Randstad Region in the context of the PURPLE General Assembly and the Dutch Presidency of the European Union. The Randstad Region comprises the four Dutch provinces Flevoland, North Holland, South Holland and Utrecht. The four provinces, the four big cities and the metropolitan regions collaborate intensively on a variety of issues, including embedding strong peri-urban areas in a competitive economy. In the context of the seminar excursions were made to peri-urban areas to see how they connect to the metropolitan area, making the region an attractive place to live, work and invest in. The PURPLE network represents the interests of peri-urban areas. One of the priorities of the Dutch EU Presidency is the EU Urban Agenda.

**For more information, please contact:**

Sidony Venema - EU representative of the Province of Flevoland / Regio Randstad

T + 32 2 737 9954

E [venema@nl-prov.eu](mailto:venema@nl-prov.eu)

[www.randstadregion.eu](http://www.randstadregion.eu)